

Arizona Republican Magazine Page

A POSITIVE CURE THE ARIZONA REPUBLICAN SUNDAY STORY A COMPLETE NOVELETTE

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Jo Fuller put her hand to her side. There was that queer feeling again, as though her heart had died in her bosom. She had had it for months and more, and more often lately. Her father had it and died of it. Perhaps she would have been resigned to it had it not happened at that moment to look down into the street two stories below and see a boy with a basket of arbutus in his arm. Arbutus and spring! After all, she was only twenty-seven, and she never had had any real joy in her life. They had been so poor while her father lived, and afterwards she had had to do all the earning. There had been six weary years of doing double duty—going forth to win bread and coming home to nurse a constantly failing mother. No wonder her fair hair had a streak of gray in it over each temple. Then suddenly she was alone, with bills to be paid in every direction. She had been able to pay them, but only by a pittance that was as soon as the last receipt was signed her great-uncle Crosby Fuller's bequest should have come to her. To her, she felt, to do her any good. It was her mother who had needed the money, and her mother was gone.

Now with that queer feeling at her heart she wondered what she should do with the money. She had no near relatives or intimate friends. She was thinking of leaving it all to a child, her son, when she suddenly occurred to her that she might perhaps have a little of it to consult a specialist. So when closing time came Jo went straight to the little brown house in the quiet street to see Dr. Kerrigan. It was a modest place, but when Jo looked into the physician's face she looked into the physician's face she saw a man who did not need to be flattered. He was a man who had seen the world, and he was a man who had seen the world.

"I don't mind so much dying," she breathed, "as dying in the spring. Somehow, you know, you always hope that this spring is going to be different."

"It is going to be different," said the doctor, "for you are going to make an effort to have it so. You are going to find an interest in life. That's what you need, not medicine, not rest, not diversion. Let me describe the situation to you as it is. Here you are a woman who has fought her way up through all sorts of difficulties to a certain success. Your position here is a good one, and that at last the means to lay it aside arise you cannot bring yourself to use them. You go on working because the order of your life has become habit. Every day brings the same routine, which you perform more and more mechanically. The time your subconsciousness is devaluing all sorts of eccentricities. One of these eccentricities is a fear of dying in the heart of the spring. Your father did. Naturally your heart begins to register symptoms. You need something to carry you away from yourself to make you forget your ego. You must have a big, fresh, new interest in life. Look about you and see if you can find one and then come back and tell me about it."

A big, fresh, new interest in life! Weighted with the responsibility of finding the impossible, Jo fairly staggered out of the doctor's office. "One moment," said Fuller. "It was the doctor's voice at her shoulder that just step into my car there and let

Colin take you home. River road, Colin."

"Yes, sir," said Colin. He was a thin, pale man with a cough, not a regular chauffeur at all. But he could drive! Jo, beside him in the roadster, watched with amazement as he skillfully threaded the tangle of traffic in Water street and sped out upon the beautiful river road. She was certainly being taken home by a most unorthodox way, but she enjoyed it. It was indeed her first intimate experience with an automobile. She watched Colin's hands and feet and the thought came to her: "Why, I could do that!"

The sharp March wind blew cold into her face and cooled her fair hair. Out of the corner of his eye Colin glanced at her admiringly. "Is learning to drive a very difficult thing?" she demanded.

"No, ma'am. You just got to keep your head every second, that's all. You wouldn't think it, but they say women make the best drivers."

Indeed! Jo's tone was full of delight. "Women mind details more than men and driving is all detail. Why, I'd never even read in a book that women were better drivers than men. You see, I'd had a spell of bad luck—sickness and my job turned over to some one else. I was a bookmaker. Doc, he got hold of me. He's a great man, Doc Kerrigan is. He gave me a new interest in life."

An interest in life! It seemed that others besides herself lacked it. Just then the car approached a motor sales stable at which a string of shining cars were just arriving. "Just off the train," Colin said. "That's an awful good make."

Jo interrupted. "What car do you mean?"

It all happened so quickly that Jo felt rather stunned. She was the owner of a car—a big, sleek passenger car. Why, she had never seen a car like it before. As a matter of fact, the salesman and not she had done the selecting. The rest of the afternoon she spent in trying to learn the mechanics of the machine, and the mechanic said he had never had so good a pupil. She said it, too, had so much to say about it. The third day when Jo returned to her boarding house after a long, exciting day, she found her father had called twice in her absence and left a command that she should call them up.

In the three days that she had not been going to the office her work had been done. She had found that non-essentials. She had found that she could live without it. She told Mr. Mercer, who he called her father, that she was better than any tonic. And her heart! But she never thought of that now.

It was on one of these country roads that she found the white house among the trees with a grassy knoll for a backyard. On the gate post was a sign: "For sale. Inquire within."

A woman opened the door—a tiny, white-robed woman, so fine that it seemed a breath could blow her away. On the table before her lay a tray of babies, big, rosy cherubs, all smiles and dimples. A little girl of

five was amusing them.

"I've come," Jo began, "to inquire about your sign."

"Yes," hope lighted the woman's face. "Step in, please, and take a seat."

As she sat down she glanced at the room. It was pitifully bare and neat. Almost its only ornament was a big crayon portrait of a young man in a soldier's uniform.

The woman sat down and looked at her hands as she turned them in her lap. "You're the first person who inquired," she said, "though I put up the sign a week ago. Property isn't always good, and I'm sure I'll make it given up." One of the babies crawled up to her side and she lifted him up.

"A beautiful twin boy!" Jo exclaimed.

"Yes, aren't they? That's my little daughter, too. I've another girl of eight and boy of ten. They're at school. I've five children. And my husband—" She lifted her eyes to the portrait. That finished the story. "He was a brave soldier; couldn't get along. His father and grandfather fought before him. So when he got restless and I saw that he was wanting to go I had him sent here. But of course it makes it hard for the children and me. I've this little place and nothing else in the world. I suppose if I could get along, or if I had folks to help me. But I'm a stranger in these parts. You see we'd just got here when he died."

To sell seems the only way, I shall try to make the money take care of us all until I have got to working. Of course I can't leave the babies just yet. It's a good little place," she said. "I'm sure you'd like it."

"I'm sure I would," Jo replied.

One June afternoon Jo was admiring a new hutch and pen that she had just finished making for a quartet of handsome brown rabbits, the property of Bobby Starr, who stood beside her, looking down at a saucy, spotted pet. Eleanor and Katherine were there, too. They usually were all three as close to Jo as they could get, and she found under their pleasant and satisfaction in their presence.

"Run, Eleanor, and pull a fresh head of lettuce for them," she was saying when she heard the sound of a car and turned to see a heavy roadster pause at her gate. She recognized Colin first, then with a gas she saw Dr. Kerrigan. Detaching herself from the children, she moved forward to meet him.

"What's this? What's this?" he demanded, smiling, as they shook hands. "What are you doing here, my girl?"

"Oh, I'm farming," Jo answered. "Don't you like my place? I'm growing more in love with it every minute."

So that's why you left town? People don't recall you made me a certain promise. I'm here to see why you haven't kept it!"

"I deserve a scolding," Jo laughed. "But when I've got a farm and a whole new adopted family of five and two pure-bred Jersey cows and a pig and a flock of chickens and a hired man to boss and crops to grow—" She paused, rather breathless.

"Well," said the doctor, "you seem to have had my advice with a vengeance and got a big new interest in life."

He might have said as he did last week, but he had helped him to find a new interest in life. But he kept that for a later time, when Jo should be more ready to hear him.

"To cure criminal contagion it is necessary to use the contagion of fear. The duel disappeared from England the day it was known that the survivor of a contest would be hanged."

Can humanity be preserved entirely from mental contagion? A vain hope! Look at the tyrannical fashion exercises upon the fair sex. All women will tell you that their hat or their dress is unconquerable and that their high heels are unhygienic. But they would not give them up for anything, so long as fashion decrees that they shall wear them.

How then can you expect that men—sons of the daughters of Eve—shall ever be free from the mental and hereditary contagion?

be a worthy and industrious and commendable Factor in Human Progress, is not that which furnishes the sustained Power for the Long Game and the Steady Pull.

Wherefore, when a good cause is sorting, applaud the speed with which we get under way, but I wait for the steeper and slower pull that doth certify that we are out on the Main Line, and actually moving toward our Destination.

THE EGOTIST

From the Boston Transcript.

There's no denying that Bill has a pretty high opinion of himself. He thinks he is one man in a thousand.

"Not if I know him, he doesn't," he thinks he's the other 999."

THE DIFFICULTY.

From the Vancouver Province.

Father—You ought to go to work for you have reached your majority. Grand—Yes, but mine isn't a working majority.

COMPETITION.

From the Washington Star.

"Our leaders have been complaining of the table."

"Yes," replied Farmer Cornsloss. "Next summer me and Josh is going to open up a little restaurant where they can go and show their corn for our menu here at the house."

Michigan partridges reported diseased may only be putting out safety first propaganda.

Watching the Parade BY JOHN PILGRIM

Old Man Sharkey came into the office this morning to sell me some life insurance. By golly, he said it. I had no more intention of taking any more insurance just at this time than I have of chartering a mudboat and making a cruise through the Dismal Swamp, but I did it.

"He's an old humdinger," I said to his boss at lunch.

"Now he is," said his boss. "But six months ago he just took up a lot of loose room."

Come to think of it, the old man has certainly changed. He used to creep meekly about. Now he bristles in on high. His cheeks were always covered with a soft, white, pathetic looking fuzz. Now he shaves down to the wrinkled pink skin. His collars used to hang on his neck like a horseshoe on a peg. Now they hug close and look like the pictures in the street cars. His clothes used to be black and dejected and floppy and mournful looking. Now his back looks like that of a he-flapper.

"He told me," said his boss, "that he read somewhere that age is just a bad habit. So he took account of stock. He said that he found he was eating as well as ever, and his eyes were good, and he was interested in the papers and politics and new inventions and the Paris styles."

"(Shucks), he said to himself, 'I'm not old enough to go pussyfooting around the way I have been. I'm going to take a brace. I'm going to shoot some money on fancywork clothes and haircuts and shaves and shoe shines and wear destructive neckties instead of black strings. I've just been waiting for some one to come around and lay a couple of quarts on my eyelids. Hereafter I'm going to act as a'."

His boss said that Old Man Sharkey has come back as an insurance salesman. He should be a better seller than nine out of ten of the kids, because of his acquaintance and his standing in our town, but he had slipped. He says that Sharkey has about convinced him that age is a habit, after all.

"And it's a habit I'm not going to form," said his boss. "But I'll tell you one thing. He's darn near broken his daughter's heart. She thinks it's perfectly scandalous the way her Pa behaves."

LAUGH WITH US

Colonel Theodore Roosevelt was talking at a dinner upon doughboy pluck. "A doughboy," he said, "is in the hand near Chateau-Thierry. The surgeon who treated the wound thinking to put some embrocation on the wound, I was introduced to the next room and fetch me that phial on the shelf." (No, he said, "I don't do," said the doughboy, firmly, as he lit a fresh cigarette. "If this hand's got to come off, I insist on your using a knife or a hatchet.")

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with hands outstretched. Free at last! said the man calmly. "Don't you know me?" said the stranger, as if hurt. "I was introduced to you at the charity bazaar." "Sorry," said the man. "I don't recognize you in my make-up."

A Scotsman arrived in London so inebriated that he was arrested. "I fell into his arms," said the man, "and he was introduced to the next room and fetch me that phial on the shelf." (No, he said, "I don't do," said the doughboy, firmly, as he lit a fresh cigarette. "If this hand's got to come off, I insist on your using a knife or a hatchet.")

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